

A hand holding a small plant against a blurred forest background. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, holding a small green plant with several leaves. The background is a soft-focus forest scene with sunlight filtering through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall mood is natural and sustainable.

Hennepin County Zero Waste Plan

Community Conversations Highlights

Hennepin County Zero Waste Plan Community Conversations Hosted

- **Number of organizations: 18**
- **Number of conversations hosted: 31**
- **Estimated number of participants: 500**

Hennepin County Zero Waste Plan Grantees Cohort

- Encouraging Leaders
- Community Power
- Climate Generation/YEA MN
- MN Renewable Now
- Action to Equity
- Center for Hmong Arts and Talent
- Congregations Caring for Creation
- Ebenezer Oromo Evangelical Church
- Somali American Women Action Center
- Thai Cultural Council of Minnesota
- Audubon Neighborhood Association
- Eastside Neighborhood Services
- Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota
- McKinley Community
- Growing North Minneapolis
- Off The Blue Couch
- Resilient Cities and Communities w/ Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia
- Little Earth Water Protectors/ Native American Community Development Institute

Hennepin County Zero Waste Plan Core Team Visioning

Words that come to mind when thinking of the waste management project and Hennepin County Core cohort team?

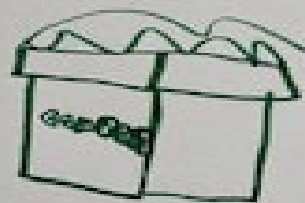
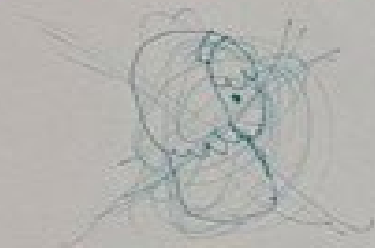
- The first word that comes to mind is collaborative, I want everyone to be heard in developing the outcome.
- I would like to see relationships strong and professional
- That we can establish relationships beyond the plan
- Being respectful and understanding that

Hennepin County Zero Waste Plan Community Visioning

What is one word you wish to carry with you into 2022?



Making good recycling
Choices Are important




Wed sday march 24 2022 at 5:30pm to 7:00

Emerging themes

- Community wants **equitable participation**: Examine how Zero Waste Plan is being embrace **across communities, cultures and other affinities**.
- **Consistent messaging and marketing that speaks to all audiences**.
- **Funding and technical assistance** to implement ideas emerging from conversations.
- **Educational programming that serves the whole community**.
- Continue to **engage community** in this process.
- **Encourage and fund collaborative efforts** across neighborhoods to build communities.

Summary

Valuable opportunity for neighborhoods and other community-based organizations to come together, receive quality education about waste management, share ideas, and make commitments for doing more to help our Earth.



Some confusion about how to reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost.



Deep motivation to learn, change behaviors, get children involved, and collaborate within their respective communities



Participants expressed gratitude for educational session, where they learned much



Information awareness about HERC, much interest about reports, health impact, etc.

Summary, continued

Environmental Justice is Racial Justice

Lived experiences vary dramatically around racial, gender, and class lines.

These experiences correlate to neighborhoods in Hennepin County.

An overwhelming number of responses pointed to issues of producer responsibility/impact, and systematic oppression as obstacles in participants' individual waste management.

Drop off sites for seniors, unfortunately, we do not have anything set up for seniors, we need better accessibility options.

Equity

How can Hennepin County make the information and tools more accessible?

How will solutions impact those most vulnerable communities?

What happens after these community conversations? (an often-asked question)

Space is needed for residents to share insights and report back on their experiences as changes are being made.

Gift cards were welcome incentives.

Equity and Education



Need clarity on who can access recycling and compost bins



Apparent gap in communication: City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Housing Association, Waste Management, and residents



Residents in Public Housing report experience of not feeling heard by City of Minneapolis staff



Programming for children who provided illustrations, and their participation

"Apartments owned by the Minneapolis Public Housing Association have different rules and guidelines for trash and recycle."

"I feel like a lot of City of Minneapolis employees can be very rude sometimes and do not listen to residents' needs."

INEQUITY

"Not having access to all the bins needed to separate garbage from recycling, gets in the way of recycling more."

"I can call to clarify what the rules are, and what contracts the City of Minneapolis currently has with Minneapolis Public Housing." (Henn Co staff)

INEQUITIES, cont'd

Shared lived experiences varied dramatically around racial, gender, and class lines, which also tend to correlate with neighborhoods in Hennepin County.

Education about how environmental justice is also racial justice – make this connection for residents. Education on where trash, recycling, compost goes after collected.

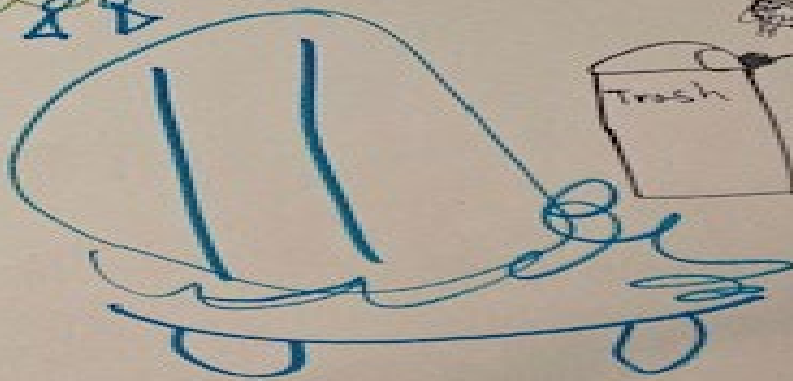
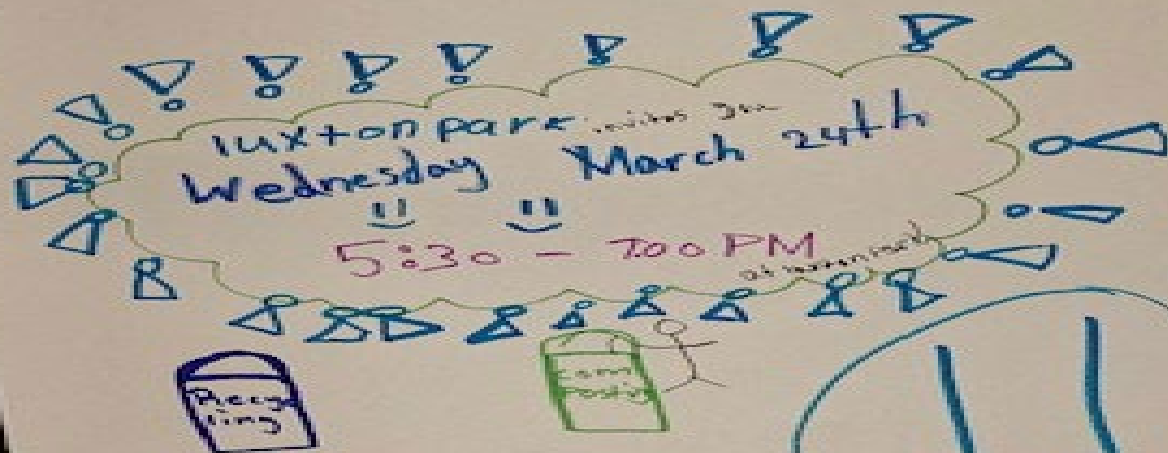
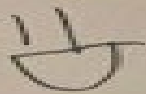
"It doesn't make sense to ask people to pay for recycling, especially low-income areas."

Narrative shift: "Personal responsibility framework is frustrating; Why is government not making it easier. If we are ever going to get to a point of ZW, state has to incentivize individuals. It has to be super easy and cheap. Globally, the US ships most of its hazardous waste recycling overseas to global south. We ship a lot of trash

"The HERC should be moved especially with people's health in this area. And the city is getting more heavily populated. It's not improving. More trash, more lungs to hurt. Needs to be gotten rid of. Plus we need the property. What's goin on? I see the city has big open grass area on 55. I'm curious what they're going to put there. I kind of want a local coffee shop. There's not enough of anything here (the Norhtside). There's not even a gas station within a mile. Not even a grocery store. It would be nice to have more local; more black owned businesses. Anything we can put in place of that (HERC) for the community. Access to food-organic AND affordable."

"Those with privilege are so comfortable with what they have and not making change. The people most impacted by our current waste system are urban areas. They forget about us. The poor people."

Community conversation on how to PROCESS TRASH, RECYCLING OR COMPOSTING



Managing Trash and Waste

"My building has two chutes, one for recycling, one for trash. It is easy to separate them."

"Recycling is difficult when you don't know what to recycle."

"Recycling is too much work."

"I am worried about increased use of plastics; how can we reduce packaging?"

Building new habits - 21 days (maybe an incentive or 21-day challenge for getting residents involved).

"No reusable containers."

Managing, cont'd

Seems like these community conversations were helpful for participants - maybe consider doing more of these? Helping neighbors to meet each other, educate and get questions answered, and organize in their community.

Hennepin County should offer more in-service trainings and lectures (this could be more beneficial for residents and employee in Hennepin County).

Consumers can buy longer lasting things instead of disposable.

Hennepin County staff provide education at churches, apartment buildings, schools, neighborhood groups, etc.

One person's feedback raised the idea about community accountability groups - working together and holding each other accountable.

What is composting?

"When you toss food scraps, put in a compost bin." (a young girl

"I really like it about composting, but it is difficult to do. How do I do that? If there are no bins nearby. This is a discussion how we can do this; it is just the first step. We can make it happen.."

"Composting is basically vitamin for gardens for dirt, they are food for your plants, vitamins for the soil."

"What else gets in the way of recycling/ knowledge, trash cans available, knowing how to do it, right?"

"We can make it happen. Not many people knew that there is a compost bin in the back of the apartment housing."

Barriers to recycling

"I am here because I want to learn more about how important it is to separate trash and recycling, because I feel for myself, that I am lacking more knowledge about it."

"I see most people don't understand what each sign does represent. They can, they may know like which one is recycling and which one is not. Sometimes there are more logos or signs on the trash can. And so maybe they can. They don't know it just like thrown away."

"Most of the time the trash area is not clear. And sometimes for example, I'm living in one of the subsidized apartments, I am retired lady. I'm living in there. The parents sends their kids, their kids all over the hallway, this trash will be all over the hallway. This is good to have an advice and more teaching."

"Recycling is difficult when you don't know what to recycle."

Health and HERC

"And what does it mean for plastics to be burned in the trash? So, plastics, so if you are putting all your waste in the trash in Hennepin County, I believe, not all of Hennepin County but parts of Hennepin County - the trash that comes from office buildings in North Minneapolis I believe South Minneapolis and a couple of other areas. All that stuff gets burned in the HERC, in the incinerator. So, what does it mean for plastics to be burned with trash? It means pollutants, health consequences and how communities especially Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color are impacted that because we don't know."

New Ideas



Incentives need to take equity into account – people are impacted disproportionately based on income and other factors.



Strong desire to collaborate as a community.



Participants were interested in working together as renters/homeowners to invest in the community and create a welcoming, cared for environment.



Participants recommended guides for residents to know what can be recycled.



Participants recommended information about impacts to the Earth.



Participants recommended youth in employment to help with recycling.

New Ideas, cont'd

A lot of discussion on disincentives and incentives – one participant shared that the trash company started charging more if recycling was found in the trash.

Confusion about logos on recycle bins – perhaps using photos and text/words to explain.

Policy related to Corrections: Explore how Hennepin County could derail youth from Juvenile Justice System to instead do community services in the environmental area as restitution.

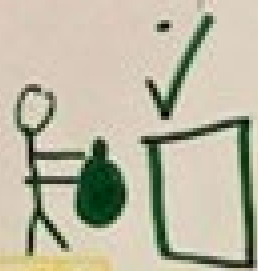
Creating marketing videos to show people HOW to actually do this - examples of behavior changes in action. Rusty and the Crew website

Ideas,
continued:
**YOUTH
VOICES**

**"We can get their attention through:
Posters with cool fonts,
cartoon/illustration, something fun to
look at."**

**"Games - they all use or know about
Discord, Creative content/Social media,
Video content, TikTok, Snapchat,
Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, YouTube,
Facebook use, mainly for family
purpose, Memes, Engaging activities."**

trash? Recycle? Compost?



Amira

even people from ANIME recycle?

Please don't litter

trash

Recycle

Compost

Recycle

it's a flooring story.

why do we recycle?

let's not recycle

oh no thank you

no food

i love recycling

don't say this in a real contest

even bad things guys from over the top day

leave it alone you should

MAKE A great day

Data Set: Community Conversations Overview Report –
Initial Feedback in May

Reactions to the Data



*Pleasant surprises? Celebrations?
Signs of growth? Positive directions?*

- I am pleased to see that there is a collaboration piece to this: we only get one Earth
- Adopt the standards developed by Recycle Across America
<https://www.recycleacrossamerica.org/>
- Provide education, resources onsite, leverage stipends from companies
- Community members are ready to do what they have to do
- Resources are lacking, we are confident we can do it.



*Unwelcome surprises? Disappointments?
Signs of regression? Concerning trends?*

- Property managers need to learn how to manage waste
- Putting recycling in plastic bags
- Educating property managers in key: 103 units – and not enough space for trash
- It all gets backed up
- You have over 200 residents
- It is upsetting
- More pick ups throughout the week is needed



*Relationships coming to mind? Options?
Connections or catalysts seen?*

- Explore opportunities for job skill building
- Universality is very important
- Using the 4 C's – Colors are missing
- 100% people are engaged
- Include people with disabilities
- People come into relationships based on commonalities
- Differences may separate us
- Relationships are with us and with the Earth
- Love connection
- Bringing us closer together



Implications? Key Points?

- More accountability is needed from Henn Co. & partners
- Community needs to come together
- See where \$ is going to fund public cans
- Business: financial role – keeping our communities clean
- Neighborhood association = trash bins outside, associations covered the costs
- Property owner: I should not have to pay for that service
- We need more workers

Data Set: Community Conversations Overview Report – from report May

Reactions to the Data



*Pleasant surprises? Celebrations?
Signs of growth? Positive directions?*



*Unwelcome surprises? Disappointments?
Signs of regression? Concerning trends?*



*Relationships coming to mind? Options?
Connections or catalysts seen?*



Implications? Key Points?

- We are bigger cities
- Our property taxes are high
- Hold solid waster collection more accountable
- We with the least education are paying more
- We have cans on the streets getting overfilled, nobody recycles
- We need community gardens pop up
- Let's create more jobs so we have more employment
- There should be \$incentives when we adopt a storm drain
- Or include in property tax refund

Data Set: Community Conversations Overview Report – from report May

Reactions to the Data



*Pleasant surprises? Celebrations?
Signs of growth? Positive directions?*



*Unwelcome surprises? Disappointments?
Signs of regression? Concerning trends?*



*Relationships coming to mind? Options?
Connections or catalysts seen?*



Implications? Key Points?

- High-income nations are responsible for 74% of global excess material use, driven primarily by the USA (27%) and the EU-28 high-income countries (25%).
- We are spending 2TT on the war
- 750BB in clean energy
- There is no resource scarcity
- Money appears for war
- So, what are our next steps?



The following are additional quotes from the
community conversation notes

Pleasant surprises

- Lots of great ideas for engaging youth!
- Community members offered ideas around incentives and educational services that would be helpful.
- The meeting concluded with participant and the Thai Cultural Council of MN asking Hennepin County staff about proper disposal for cooking oil of at least 10 gallons.
- A proposed project to repurpose the oil was discussed but concerns about inadequate funds were voiced. Participants wondered if there were any funds available from the Zero Waste Program to help support this project.
- Minneapolis sends out a helpful guide - residents can post it on their fridge
- Focus on making recycling convenient and providing the education (noticing that some people were still throwing food in the trash even when compost was right next to the trash).
- Interest in holding companies that are creating the packaging in the first place more accountable - using materials that are more earth friendly and reducing packaging.
- One participant talked about having a group to report back to about personal waste management habits (raises an idea of having community accountability groups - to work together and hold each other accountable).
- Leadership opportunities for kids - organizing Reduce, Reuse, Recycle efforts in their neighborhoods.

Pleasant surprises, Cont'd

- PreK-12 curriculum to include education and projects that raise awareness and help kids develop healthy habits around taking care of our Earth.
- We need to get a report on who is being affected the most from the harmful chemicals that are being expelled out from HERC
- The garbage burner in North Minneapolis is a point of concern, so we don't have to burn our garbage. Cub and Target should also be approached.
- I am currently working with environmental groups on air quality in North Minneapolis, I am trying to get them to do monitoring in high rises with elders to see if this could be a cause for their health issues.
- Hennepin County incentivize or require vendors/suppliers to use sustainable packaging to obtain contracts with the county. "Policy regulation on plastic packaging."
- Or one up front is the idea of you basically tax the companies upfront for not using - if they don't use sustainable solutions. And then you give the - and basically you take that tax and reimburse people based on income and other factors. So, you help offset the cost for people who you know, impact them to a higher degree. But you disincentivize companies from you know wasting.
- Where would funding come from for incentives, education, infrastructure, etc.?
- Overall sense that a much bigger investment (money) is needed by state/government for these efforts to be successful.
- For renters: If people recycle, they could be put into a drawing for \$500. Need to be able to track this.
- For property managers: Incentivize the property owner so they may support recycling.
- Property managers need incentives (taxes or fines).
- So, when your property manager is paying your hauler to take away your trash and recycling, they're paying 0% tax on recycling but they're paying 38.5% tax on trash because you have to pay a tax, both to the county and to the state. So that's a main incentive for why we're encouraging people to recycle because you're actually, the property managers can save money because there's no tax on that recycling.

Unwelcome surprises, disappointments

Teacher doesn't want to try because they are afraid it'll make the compost bin smell and grow maggots and attract unwanted pests.

"They keep increasing taxes, but we don't see it improving things"

"Takeaway from me is frustration- Amazon was mentioned, and next day/2-day delivery, and all of this packaging that goes out. Yes, it would be great if we could say 'let's put on the books these companies have to pay for whatever amount to offset their waste', but shoot, it seems like we can't get them to pay federal taxes, how are we going to get them to do anything?"

"I contacted the commissioner because I don't believe we can move fast enough. We need to go to the governor, to those at a high level. We have hotels, new housing, and a play area in the neighborhood where HERC is located. We need to figure out how we can go to the highest authority. How could they build something near the HERC?. Then I see people without homes under the bridge, pollution from the cars above"

"I think it needs to be shut down. Ideally, we wouldn't be passing the burden on to another community. If it has to spring up again, it needs to be sited in a wealthy white community, not because they deserve pollution but because they probably don't want it and it would spur the "nope" solution that we really want which would be true investment in sustainable and renewable energy initiatives. The HERC is a greenwashed form of energy. Would like to see a major federal and state investment in beginning of cycle waste stream solutions (ex: major subsidies for compostable packaging and sustainable material, not plastics)."

"I live on the Northside, and I have asthma. I heard they were trying to shut [the HERC] down and wanted to know what is going on."

Food with recycle symbols on them - not always accepted by city/county

Relationships coming to mind, Connections or catalysts seen?

This conversation brought attention to elders, people with disabilities, as well as cultural considerations.

Participants desired access to more resources, videos, etc. translated into different languages.

Participant reflections and shared experiences exhibited clear patterns around waste. These experiences varied dramatically around racial, gender, and class lines, which also tend to correlate with neighborhoods in Hennepin County.

An overwhelming number of responses pointed to issues of producer responsibility/impact, and systematic oppression as obstacles in participants' individual waste management.

Relationships, Options, Connections or catalysts seen

- Participants expressed concerns about burning garbage at HERC
- "Health! **We was talking about the dark cloud over North Minneapolis.** You know what I'm saying? It (the HERC) set the mood and the tone. First and foremost, give the jobs to the black and brown people that they claim they're gonna help with these 'green job' trainings and stuff, and then secondly, you send them (facilities like the HERC) to our areas and neighborhoods where they're not even cleaning up, or even putting the money and the time back into. The way that they treat us- there's no respect. Ash just fly up off of there, and the proof is the soot we had many years ago in our windows. And yet, that don't stop nobody. They just cleaning up the freeways, but not cleaning up the streets, or our communities. They are cleaning up in the suburbs and making sure they're very presentable. And a lot of the times when you go out there, there's nothing to really clean. So how come they can't be in our areas cleaning? What is our tax money even paying for? So, we're affected by it in so many different ways to the point of how we treat our area now, it's a cycle. And it really does need to be fixed from the inside out. The whole system is broken on every level, not just the waste, the pollution, the food, the housing, all of it."
- "I hope that whatever comes after the HERC is **community controlled and regenerative.**"
- "So, it's very tricky. **But the city is gonna have to come up with something that includes the people's voice.** We all are really talking **and coming up with the solution and creating something that works for everybody.** This includes the homeless, because we got to think about everybody if we're going to talk about "us" to really do this and make it effective - it has to be cost effective, time effective, and effective for everybody to use and be able to do."
- "**So, what's the city's plan?** You'd think that there would be some sort of **urgent push to get community involvement,** and so I'm glad they're at least open to hearing from the cohort orgs and those bases, but it just feels like the city's so disengaged from the majority of the population, intentionally. The streets are full of trash. The city doesn't do anything about it. It just looks sad. City works are falling apart, and the attempts at city engagement seem kind of disingenuous. But maybe there's a part of the city department that really cares about waste."

Relationships coming to mind, Options, Connections or catalysts

Folks spoke about worsening habits the older one got because of acquired responsibilities and struggles whether it be health or finances. The continued burdening on overburdened populations seems to know no bounds, despite that their overall contribution to waste, and thus the climate crisis, is a fraction of the privileged few.

This is even truer on the more macro scale as seen in the April 1st study that was published in The Lancet Planetary Health demonstrating that “from 1970 to 2017 high-income nations are responsible for 74 percent of global excess material use, driven primarily by the USA (27 percent) and the EU-28 (25 percent). The global south is responsible for only 8% and it is largely renewable, whereas that of the North Atlantic states is non-renewable. Meanwhile, in 2021, the world spent over \$2 trillion on war, but only invested around \$750 billion in clean energy and energy efficiency.” <https://tinyurl.com/2wyzj2hz>

Participants **shared confusion about how to recycle syringes, medications, electronics, batteries, hazardous materials.**

A lot of discussion on disincentives and incentives – one participant shared that the trash company started charging more if recycling was found in the trash.

Working together to build a “Save the World” culture – recycling, repurposing, etc.

Benefits of recycling = environment and cost savings.

Education about how environmental justice is also racial justice - make this connection for residents.

Education on where trash, recycling, compost goes after it's collected.

Develop a guide for the people who don't know what goes in recycling.

Education can be combined with health-related topics and should include the process of recycling, composting, and trash.

Policy makers should be the first to create content and information.

“My coworker made a comment the other day that was like, whatever public health campaign they did to get people to remember to cut up the plastic loopy things on a six pack of pop or beer... that's the kind of program we'd need. Because everyone and their mom knows to cut up the loopies or else they'll kill a turtle.”

“Commercial composting: it's so easy! State needs to offer credits or whatever to businesses to get them to do it. I know Eureka recycling measures the quality of your compost so they can come back and be like, dude, stop putting plastic in your compost - so that could be tied into a discount. I think it's Eureka”

Reactions to the data: Implications? Key points?

Create marketing videos to show people how to do this, examples of behavior change in action. Ex. Rusty and the Crew website.

Self-audit was helpful: It kind of clicked in my head to say, "hey pick up some of the things around your house and read how you dispose of it."

Review waste management rules that cities and counties diverge on. Make them more consistent.

New habits: reduce packaging, reuse, recycle, shop at secondhand stores, donate to secondhand stores